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Two Buddhist Inscriptions from Deorkothar (Dist. Rewa, Madhya Pradesh)

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INTRODUCTION

Deorkothar lies in Tehsil Deonthar, District Rewa, Madhya Pradesh (MP), roughly halfway between Allahabad on the Gangetic plain to the north and Rewa on the Vindhya plateau to the south. It is not far west of National Highway 27 (81°40'E, 24°56'N). Perched on the northern escarpment of the eastern Vindhyas, the site commands a breathtaking view of receding mesas that drop hundreds of feet to the valley of the River Tons below (fig. 1). Deorkothar, discovered in 1982, was excavated by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) under Phani Kanta Mishra (then Superintending Archaeologist, Bhopal Circle) beginning in 1999/2000. Soon after the first campaign, the excavator published an article in the journal *Marg* for the year 2000 and, in addition, summarized the results in two booklets.¹ On February 15 and 16, 2011, Peter Skilling visited Deorkothar and took photos of the site and of fragments of an inscribed pillar kept in the ASI office, Rewa. The present article is based mainly on this material.

Deorkothar is important because of the age of the Buddhist remains excavated there. This is particularly true for the inscriptions, which are dated by the excavator to

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¹ P.K. Mishra, 'Deorkothar Stūpa: New Light on Early Buddhism', *Marg* 52, no. 1, 2000, pp. 64–74; *Deorkothar (Barhat), Rewa. A unique, recently excavated Buddhist site in Central India* and *Discovering the Past. Bhojpur, Bhimbetka, Deorkothar* – both published by the Archaeological Survey of India, Bhopal Circle, Bhopal, 2001. The booklets were presented to P. Skilling when he visited Bhopal Circle in 2010. Reports on the excavations are published in *Indian Archaeology 1999–2000 – A Review* (ASI, New Delhi, 2005), pp. 100–102 and pl. 90, continued in 2000–01 [2006], p. 91 and 2001–02 (2008), p. 110. There have been no further reports from 2002–03 (2009) on. The neighbouring village is named Bharhat, but to prevent confusion, the site is called 'Deorkothar'. Literature on the site includes: Radhakant Varma, 'The Unknown Stupa Complex of Deur Kothar (Rewa), M.P.' *Bulletin of the Deccan College Post-Graduate & Research Institute*, Vol. 49 (Professor H.D. Sankalia Memorial Volume) (1990), pp. 427–430; P.K. Mishra, 'Excavations at the Buddhist site of Deorkothar, Madhya Pradesh, India', *Circle of Inner Asian Art (SOAS) Newsletter*, Issue 13, June 2001, pp. 3–13; Amrendra Kumar Singh, 'Eastern Vindhyas: A Crucible of Efflorescence of Buddhist and Saivite Edifices', *Arts of Asia* 38.5 (September–October 2008), pp. 134–145; A.K. Singh, 'Buddhist Stupa Complex at Deour Kothara and Dundhi Gadhi and the Monuments in its Neighbourhood', *Purātattva* No. 38 (2008), pp. 202–204 and Pls. 1–11, pp. 31–32 end of volume.

the third century BCE, that is to say almost to the time of Aśoka, which is perhaps slightly too early. One inscription (our 'Inscription I') was made known almost immediately by colour photographs published in *Marg* and in *Indian Archaeology – A Review 1999–2000* (plate 90).² A second inscription (our 'Inscription II'), with two further fragments, was illustrated in the booklet *Discovering the Past*. The booklets gave provisional, but not entirely successful, readings of the two main inscriptions.

Deorkothar was clearly a large and important Buddhist establishment. The centre of cult would have been the huge brick stūpa designated Stūpa no. 1; set on a flat area (fig. 2), it is about 9.5 m in height. It was surrounded by a railing with crossbars bearing motifs like lotus roundels; some bear dedicatory inscriptions. There are three smaller ruined brick stūpas, and about thirty stone masonry stūpas, most with a drum or a raised circumambulatory (fig. 3), and there are brick remains of monastic residences. Not far from Stūpa no. 1 is a massive stone platform, perched on the edge of the plateau (fig. 4); this relates Deorkothar to the stūpa complexes of the western Vindhya, such as Sanchi, Murel Khurd, and Satdhara, where such platforms are a regular component of the ritual or residential complexes.³ Like other Buddhist sites in the Vindhya, the Deorkothar complex is adjacent to rock-shelters; 63 have been counted in the area, some decorated with rock-art (fig. 5), which is generally hard to date, or with painted Brāhmī inscriptions. Rock shelter no. 22, roughly below the platform, has a painting of a stūpa and a tree-shrine (fig. 6). Fragments of NBPW were recovered from the site, along with beads and other artefacts. We await the excavation report in order to get a fuller understanding.

The inscriptions studied here are engraved in early Brāhmī letters on fragments of a massive sandstone pillar. The fragments of the pillar were recovered from the vicinity of the large brick stūpa; the base stood near the circumambulatory, and the fragments suggest that the pillar was once many metres in height (fig. 7). It is evident that the column was deliberately toppled and smashed. A broken abacus (fig. 8), with the remains of an elephant (?), a wheel (*cakra*), and a bull, each with a standing human figure in between, was also recovered. This may have capped the column itself.

INSCRIPTION I

Reading the inscription (fig. 9) does not pose any serious problems. Our readings of the inscriptions employ the following conventions:

² The image published in *Marg* is more complete than that published in *Indian Archaeology*, because the former includes a broken chip with the upper part of the last two available *aṣṭaras* of line 1, while in the latter the chip is missing. The image on the front cover of the booklet *Deorkothar (Bharhat), Rewa*, is the same as that in *Marg*.

³ For these see Julia Shaw, *Buddhist Landscapes in Central India: Sanchi Hill and Archaeologies of Religious and Social Change, c. Third Century BC to Fifth Century AD*, London: The British Association for South Asian Studies/The British Academy, 2007; Michael Willis, with contributions by Joe Cribb and Julia Shaw, *Buddhist Reliquaries from Ancient India*, London: British Museum Press, 2000.

Reconstructed passages are placed within square brackets. Within the brackets, reconstructions that are based on the extant fragments are placed in roman type, while hypothetical reconstructions are placed in italics. The name ‘Dhamamitra’ is used as a filler for a lost longer name, and ‘Bhaṇḍu’ for a shorter name. These are simply conventions and are not meant to imply that these were the actual names.

1. bhagavato budha(sa) [*sakamunisa ātevāsi dhamamitra dhamamitrassa*
ātevāsi]
2. utaramitro utaramitrassa (ā)[*tevāsi dhamamitra dhamamitrassa ātevāsi*]
3. bhaḍu bhaḍussa ātevāsi nā(m)di(nu)[*tara nāṃdinutarassa ātevāsi upasako*]
4. upasakassa ātevāsi savajayo (sa)va[jayassa ātevāsinā]
5. dhamadevena kokuḍikena bahusutiye(na) [thabho kārāpito + + + +
+ + +]
6. usapito thabho ācariyena kasi[

A substantial part of the inscription is broken off, but, by good fortune, at least the beginning of all the lines is preserved. This is clear from the wide left margin and the regular vertical alignment of the lines. Consequently, it is possible to estimate, if only approximately, that the individual lines measured at least about 28 *akṣaras* when complete, if they were of equal length. This can be inferred from line 3, where, the name Nandinu[ttara] is only a tentative suggestion in an attempt to calculate the approximate length of the line. This assumption seems to be confirmed in line 2, where a name of four *akṣaras* would fit perfectly into the gap, which opens after the reconstruction of line 3. It cannot of course be ruled out that there might have been one more name in both of the lines. If this was a short name like Bhaḍu, then both lines 2 and 3, and line 4, would have been longer by 9 *akṣaras*; if it was a longer name like Dhamamitra, it would have been longer by 13 *akṣaras*. These calculations suggest that at least lines 1 to 3 contained about 28, or, alternatively, about 37 or 41 characters, allowing for one, or more probably when the second inscription discussed below is compared, two names lost in lines 1 to 3. In this case, the length of a line might rather have been 41 *akṣaras*. Line 4 was most likely shorter, if Inscription II discussed below is compared, and should have ended in (sa)va[jayassa ātevāsinā] /5/ *dhamadevena*. This, at the same time, provides a syntactical link between the string of nominatives and the last part of the inscription.

It is unlikely that there was one more name between Savajaya and Dhamadeva, because that would result in a line much longer than the preceding ones.

At the end of the fragment, the inscription breaks off in line 6 after the word *kasi*[, which should be the beginning of the *ācārya*’s name. That the text is lost after *kasi*[can be seen clearly only in the picture published in *Indian Archaeology 1999–2000*. It is clear that line 6 is the last line of the record, and therefore the length cannot be estimated.

It is difficult to understand all the details of the inscription, because of textual gaps that cannot be closed. This is largely due to the fact that this inscription, in part certainly because of its high antiquity, does not follow any of the common patterns or formulas used in later Buddhist donations. Firstly, the genitive *bhagavato budhasa* at the

beginning is quite unusual. Later evidence leads one to expect an opening word like *namo* or *sidhaṃ* to precede a name or title in the genitive case, or the two together as at Kanaganahalli on the pedestal of a Buddha image: *sidha namo bhagavato samasabudho sakamoni sidhatha*. In the Deorkothar inscription, it is not easy to imagine what might be the referent of the genitive, because, again due to the age of the inscription, a term like *paṭimā*, ‘image’, can be safely ruled out. As we shall see below, a solution presents itself only when the whole text, as far as it is preserved, is taken into consideration.

The persons enumerated in lines 2–4 are related to each other as *antevāsins*, a term which appears here in the form *ātevāsin*, which occurs occasionally in other inscriptions.⁴ The word expresses different forms of subordinate relationship.⁵ In a Buddhist inscription, one expects *antevāsin* to have the sense of the well-known technical term of Vinaya law, denoting a novice who lives together with his teacher (*ācārya* or *ācariya*, Vin I 60,26–29): that is to say, as a ‘pupil’. Therefore, this sequence of names of *antevāsins* is most likely a line of teachers and pupils, in which Savajaya would have been the teacher of Dhammadeva, who had the column erected.

To go back to the beginning of the inscription, the initially surprising genitive *bhagavato budhasa* now makes good sense as the name, or title, of the first teacher – that is, of the Buddha himself. The length of the assumed gap suggests that one name of four *akṣaras* is missing (or two names, if the longer variant is considered). This, however, still leaves a gap of about four *akṣaras*: following the example of the opening of the inscription quoted from Kanaganahalli, perhaps *sakamunisa* can be inserted here, giving a hypothetical text of line 1:

bhagavato budhasa [*sakamunisa ātevāsi* (+ + + +) (+ + + +) *sa ātevāsi*].

If this reconstruction is accepted, the total number of teachers and pupils can be calculated as follows: The Buddha himself is the first teacher, and Dhammadeva is the last pupil named. Besides the Buddha, six names are preserved: Uttaramitra, Bhaḍu, Nandinuttara, Upasaka, Sarvajaya and Dhammadeva. In lines 1–3, one or two names are

⁴ Keisho Tsukamoto, *A Comprehensive Study of the Indian Buddhist Inscriptions*, Part I, *Texts, Notes and Japanese Translation*, Kyoto 1996; Part II, *Indices, Maps and Illustrations*, Kyoto 1998 [rev.: G. Fussman, BEFEO 88, 2001, pp. 383–385], index s.v. *ātevāsin* etc. attested at Kanheri, Mathurā, and Kuḍā; cf. also O. v. Hinüber: *Das ältere Mittelindisch im Überblick*, Vienna, ²2001, § 12. The same lengthening of a short -a- before a nasal is found in *nā(m)dinutara*: it is impossible to decide whether or not an *anusvāra* is visible above the *akṣara* *nā*. Note that *thabo*, *dhamadina* and probably *bhaḍu* are written without *anusvāra*.

⁵ The word *antevāsin* means ‘living near to someone’, but here the technical Buddhist usage in Vinaya law stands out. This is derived from Vedic, cf. M. Hara, ‘Hindu Concepts of Teacher, Sanskrit Guru and Ācārya’, in *Sanskrit and Indian Studies: Essays in Honour of Daniel H.H. Ingalls*, Dordrecht, 1980, pp. 93–118, p. 107, note 9. In Vedic and in Middle Indic, *antevāsin* may be used for other persons living together besides ‘pupil’ or ‘apprentice’, that is, for ‘attendant’ or even ‘son’. The rare meaning ‘son’ is explained in *puttā ca nām’ete atrajo khettajo, antevāsiko, dinnako ti catubbidhā santike sippuggahaṇako antevāsiko nāma*, Ja I 135,14’–17’; in Vedic, the word is used mostly in the sense of ‘pupil’. Cf. *An Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Sanskrit on Historical Principles*, ed. by V. P. Bhatta, Vol. VII, Poona, 2004–2007, s.v. *antevāsin*, where, strangely enough, the Buddhist technical term is not mentioned; on the meaning ‘son,’ s.v. 1Aiii.

lost. Consequently, altogether at least nine or at most twelve persons were mentioned in this record, connected to each other as teacher and pupil (see table below). Depending on the number of *akṣaras* assumed to be lost, either eight or eleven teachers precede Dhammadeva as the ninth or twelfth teacher at the end of the lineage.

It seems that this teacher-disciple lineage is traced back to the Buddha himself, which is unique in inscriptions known to date. If this supposition is correct, then Dhammadeva would have belonged to the ninth or twelfth generation after the Buddha. If a 200 BCE date for the inscription is approximately correct (but the date is estimated on palaeographic evidence alone, and is therefore precarious), and if about fifteen to twenty years are allowed between each teacher and pupil, then Dhammadeva would have lived either about 120–160 or 165–220 years after the Buddha's time. If a succession of eight predecessors of Dhammadeva is assumed, the Buddha was alive between about 360–320 BCE: but this is definitely too late. Or, if Dhammadeva had twelve predecessors including the Buddha, the latter was alive about 420–365. Such a date is possible, and would favour the assumption that two names have been lost in lines 1–3.

If we have correctly understood the significance of this succession of teachers and pupils, it is a genuine disaster that the name of the direct *antevāsin* of the Buddha is lost, because this would have been the teacher to whom the Bahuśrutīya school would have traced its lineage.⁶ This reconstruction is, assuredly, highly hypothetical, but nonetheless it helps us understand the structure of the text. And it is not at all impossible that this is really a lineage going back to the Buddha.

In line 5, near the end of the inscription, part of the gap may be reasonably filled in by *thabho kārāpito* – ‘a column was made’, when one compares line 5 of Inscription II (see below). This, however, is also conjectural.

Despite the fragmentary state of preservation, a tentative translation is possible:

Lord Buddha's [pupil] ... Uttaramitra, Uttaramitra's pupil ... Bha(ṃ)ḍu, Bha(ṃ)ḍu's pupil Nāṃdinuttara. Nāṃdinuttara's pupil ... Upasaka, Upasaka's pupil Sarvajaya, [by] Sarva[jaya's pupil] Dhammadeva from Kokuḍi, a member of the Bahusutiya school, [a column was made]... erected was the column by the *ācariya* Kasi[...

Three of the six names that are preserved call for comment:

- (1) the second member of *utara-mitra*, is read here as °-mitra, on account of the lengthened right downward stroke of the *akṣara ta* being clearly visible in both instances;
- (2) the name *bhaḍu* may perhaps be understood as *bhaṃḍu*, written without *anusvāra* (cf. note 4), which may be compared as a personal name with that of the monk Bhaṇḍu who is mentioned once in the Theravāda Tipiṭaka at *Samyuttanikāya* II

⁶ For the Bahuśrutīyas, see further below.

204,5,⁷ in the Sinhalese manuscripts only, which usually preserve old and better readings.⁸

- (3) Upasaka: the first -a- in this name is short. Consequently, this is not the word *upāsaka* ‘lay follower or practitioner’, but a name of unknown derivation.

The central person of the donation is obviously Dhammadeva, who came from the town of Kokuḍi, of which the location is unknown, and who was a member of the Bahuśrutīya school. Most interesting is the word *bahusutiya*, which can be read with confidence. We can therefore state that this pillar fragment from Deorkothar gives us an important new reference to the Bahuśrutīya school, a point to which we will return in the conclusion.

To sum up: Inscription I is interesting and even important in four respects: It firmly puts the Bahuśrutīyas on the map in Madhya Pradesh, it proves that the school is very old, it shows that the Bahuśrutīyas at an early date used Middle Indic (as a school language?), and, finally, it apparently gives a lineage of teachers and pupils traced back to the Buddha.

INSCRIPTION II

A picture of a second pillar fragment bearing six lines of inscription (figs. 10, 11), broken into two fragments (here called Fragments 1 and 2), has, as far as we know, been published only in the booklet *Discovering the Past*. Also visible in the picture is a detached fragment (our Fragment 3: fig. 12) with a few stray characters, which cannot be satisfactorily connected to either Inscription I or Inscription II.⁹ Moreover, another photograph taken during the excavations, apparently unpublished to date, shows the larger fragment without fragments 2 and 3, but together with a different fourth fragment (Fragment 4) placed in the same position as the detached Fragment 3, which it replaces (fig 13).

Although the reading of the extant portions does not pose any serious difficulty, the text cannot be understood completely because of its fragmentary character. We give here a tentative reconstruction, using the same conventions as above.

⁷ In post-canonical literature, the Upāsaka Bhaṇḍu(ka) is a companion of Mahinda, whom he accompanies to Ceylon: Sp 70,1 or Mhv XIII 18, XIV 31.

⁸ A person named Bhaṇḍu made a donation at Sanchi, as did his wife (*bhaḍuno dāna[m]*, IV Sanc 397; *bhaḍuno pajāvatiya dāna[m]* IV Sanc 398); a monk named Bhaṇḍuka also made a donation (IV Sanc 293 *gotiputasa bhaḍukasa bhichuno dāna[m]*) (refs. to Tsukamoto, as in note 4 above). Tsukamoto interprets these names, most probably correctly, as Bhaṇḍu(ka).

⁹ The surviving characters, *pasako* at the end of one line, and then *raja*, at the end of another line below, would seem to come from a different inscription than those studied here because the lines are spaced further apart. It is, however, possible that there is another, shorter, line between the two. It is impossible to say at present whether the fragment is from the same or a different column, but it is likely that all of the fragments are from one and the same pillar. Note that the *pasako* of the first line may refer to the same *Upasako* mentioned in Inscription I, lines 3–4.

sakamunisa, twelve *akṣaras* are lost. If it was some other name such as *Disāgiri* (4 *akṣaras*) or *Bharaṇa* (3 *akṣaras*), only five or four *akṣaras* stood at the beginning of line 1.

While the number of *akṣaras* missing in lines 1–6 is determined by the assumed beginning of line 1, the end of line 1 has to be reconstructed in such a way that the gap of 12 *akṣaras* at the beginning of line 2 and the missing ones at the end of line 1 can be connected to the preserved beginning of line 2. This can be done successfully by inserting 17 *akṣaras* at the end of line 1, which results in 45 *akṣaras* per line, here and in the subsequent lines 2 and 3, which, most likely, were of equal length. It is not probable that the lines were 3 or 9 *akṣaras* longer and contained one more name each. All subsequent lines are filled in according to the same principle.

At the beginning of line 5 the *akṣaras* *](ch.)dakena* are preserved. The connection to the previous line 4 can be found in the detached Fragment 4, which needs a brief discussion. Four lines are visible, and there does not seem to have been another line below line 5. If this is correct, Fragment 4 continues lines 2 to 5 of the large Fragment 1, and are numbered accordingly. Line 2 of Fragment 4 should contain part of a personal name. Line 4 is crucial for the connection of Fragments 1 and 4, because this line clearly ends in *[āte]vāsinā*. The empty space following *ātevāsinā* indicates the end of the text written in this line. This is important in two respects. Firstly, line 3 is certainly longer than line 4, and so are most likely also lines 1 and 2, although they are broken off at the end. This has obvious consequences for the number of names that were originally mentioned in the inscription, even though it remains unclear how many *akṣaras* are missing at the end of lines 1 to 3. Secondly, the instrumental *ātevāsinā* gives a decisive clue for the structure of the text. For, when we compare Inscription I, the following name must be that of the donor. In this way, the two inscriptions elucidate each other, and, because of this, Fragment 4 of Inscription II can be reconstructed as indicated above.

Moreover, in both inscriptions the fourth line was shorter than the preceding ones, probably by one name. The difference of course depends on whether or not one or two names are to be inserted into the gaps and on the number of *akṣaras* in each of the names. Here, the very short fragment with its not entirely clear connection to the main Fragment 1 does not allow any conclusive argument.

These considerations on the structure are highly hypothetical, because they assume that the length of lines and names should be regular. The purpose of the reconstruction given here, however, is primarily to attempt to find out how many names may be lost and how the number of names relates to Dhammadeva's inscription (Inscription I):

| | |
|------------------------------|------------|
| 1. The Buddha | The Buddha |
| 2. Lost [3. Lost] | Anuruddha |
| 3. Uttaramitra [4.] | Sarvānanda |
| 4. Lost [5, 6. Lost] | Lost |
| 5. Bhaṇḍu [7.] | Lost |
| 6. Nandinuttara [8, 9. Lost] | Disāgiri |

| | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 7. Upasaka [10.] | Bharaṇa |
| 8. Sabbajaya [11.] | Lost |
| 9. Donor: Dhammadeva [12.] | Lost |
| | 10. Ñātakadhammagutta |
| | 11. Lost |
| | 12. Lost |
| | 13. Dhammadinna |
| | 14. Donor (lost) from (?)]ch.da |

Starting the teacher-disciple lineage in both inscriptions from the time of the Buddha, the donor Dhammadeva belongs either to the ninth or, perhaps more probably, to the twelfth generation after the Buddha, and his anonymous colleague to the fourteenth. Calculating again 15 to 20 years between pupil and teacher, Inscription II in its presumed longer version was written 160/220 years and the second one 195/260 years after the Buddha. Assuming that the inscription was engraved in about 200 BCE, the Buddha was alive somewhere between 360/420 or 395/460, and according to the different calculations based on 15 or 20 year intervals. The dates are plausible, and 15 years may be nearer to the truth than 20 when estimating the varying distance in time between teacher and pupil. Therefore, the possibility that both lineages indeed begin with the Buddha cannot be ruled out.

Even if the donations were contemporaneous, that Dhammadeva of Inscription I belonged to the twelfth generation of the lineage of teachers, while the anonymous donor of Inscription II belonged to the fourteenth generation, does not pose a problem, because there could have been considerable variation in the time elapsed between teacher and pupil. Luckily, the formulas commemorating the act of the donation are similar in both inscriptions and thus help to elucidate each other. The preparation of the column is mentioned in the second inscription as *thabho kārāpito*. This phrase can be supplied in Inscription I at the end of line 5. Both inscriptions mention the erection of the column. In addition to the erection a column, it is possible that a *torāṇa* was also constructed (*kato*), although the reading *torāṇa* is uncertain. In Inscription I, the Ācārya Kasi[seems to have been involved in the act of erecting the column. A corresponding phrase might have stood at the end of line 5 in inscription II.¹⁰ The inscription ends in line 6, because no traces of script are visible after *usāpito ca* and there is a wide space.¹¹

An exceptionally interesting word in inscription II is barely, but safely, readable: this is *giṃjaki(ya)* at the very end of line 5. The rare word *giṃjakā* occurs in the Theravāda canon in one single formula mentioning a particular type of a building, the

¹⁰ This recalls the end of the inscription by the chief physician of Rudrapuruṣadatta, year 18, where the activities of a monk are referred to, which, however, is not fully understood due to the bad state of preservation of the last line: *bhadanta* (be [or: *dhe*])*masenena aṃnuthitaṃ* ‘supported by the venerably Dhemasena (?)’. Cf. ARIRIAB 14 (2011), p. 11.

¹¹ On the far right end of the broken column there are, separated from *ca* by a long gap, some traces of what might have been script or a mason’s mark (?).

giṇṇakāvasatha at Nādika/Ñātika, a place in Magadha, e.g., in the *Mahāparinibbāna-suttanta*: *tatra sudaṃ bhagavā Nādike viharati giṇṇakāvasathe* (DN II 91,21 = II 94,15), ‘at that time the Lord was staying at Nādika in the *giṇṇaka* house’.¹² The commentaries explain the word *giṇṇakā* as *iṭṭhakāmaye āvasathe* (Sv 543,11 = Ps II 235,6 = Spk III 281,8 = Mp III 351,23 = Spk II 75,3 ‘in a house made of bricks’. As Jules Bloch (1880–1953) noticed far back in 1951,¹³ the word *giṇṇakā* survives in new Indo-Aryan languages only in the language of the peasants of Bihar, meaning a kind of brick.¹⁴ This shows that the Theravāda commentaries preserve the correct meaning of the word.

The reference to a brick structure – unfortunately again the text breaks off and the type of building remains obscure – makes good sense, because the inscribed column stood beside a massive brick stūpa, and other brick stūpas and structures were excavated in the Deorkothar complex.

Beyond the simple fact that a very rare word is attested here for the first time in an inscription, two points are remarkable. Firstly, this is obviously an ancient Eastern word and technical building term, as the Pāli evidence, together with that of present-day Indo-Aryan languages, shows. As such it can be added to the ancient Eastern technical vocabulary for terms connected with buildings, such as *aggala* ‘bolt (to close a door)’ or *tāla-chiggaḷa* ‘keyhole’ (which was soon replaced by *tāla-chidda* even in canonical Pāli). This technical vocabulary does not belong to any Indo-Aryan language.¹⁵ It is remarkable that the knowledge of the meaning of this ancient Eastern word is preserved in the Theravāda commentaries composed centuries later in far away Ceylon. This confirms the substance of the Theravādin tradition that Mahinda brought both canon and commentaries with him to Ceylon: that is, in historical terms, that the canonical texts were transmitted to Ceylon along with explanations. This seems to be very likely, since in South Asian didactic tradition texts are generally accompanied by commentaries.

That the correct meaning survived in Ceylon is all the more significant, insofar as the northern Indian Sanskrit tradition had evidently forgotten the signification of *giṇṇakā* by the time the Sanskrit *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, usually ascribed to the (Mūla)Sārvāstivādin school, was composed. Here by then incomprehensible word *giṇṇaka* is replaced by **kunjikā*, as the Tibetan transcript *kun-dzi-ka* shows.¹⁶ In the same way, the

¹² This wording occurs once in the *Vinaya* and in the *Majjhimanikāya*, five times each in DN and SN, and three times in AN.

¹³ J. Bloch, ‘Trois notes’, BEFEO 44 (1951), pp. 43–50 = *Recueil d’articles de Jules Bloch 1906–1955*, Textes rassemblés par Colette Caillat (Publications de l’Institut de Civilisation Indienne, Série in -8°, Fascicule 52), Paris 1985, pp. 401–408, particularly pp. 49 foll. = pp. 407 foll., cf. Ralph Lilley Turner, *A Comparative Dictionary of the Indo-Aryan Languages*, London, 1966, no. 4156 **giṇṇakā*; Willem B. Bollée, Review of Margaret Cone: *A Dictionary of Pāli II: g–n*, Bristol 2010, WZKS 54 (2011–2012), p. 236 refers to Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy, *Eastern Art* 1 (1931), p. 139, not accessible to the writers.

¹⁴ According to George Abraham Grierson, *Bihar Peasant Life*, Calcutta 1885, Patna 21926 § 1263 *pangīñjā*.

¹⁵ O. v. Hinüber, *Sprachentwicklung und Kulturgeschichte. Ein Beitrag zur materiellen Kultur des buddhistischen Klosterlebens*, Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur, Mainz. Abhandlungen der geistes- und sozialwissenschaftlichen Klasse, Jg 1992, Nr. 6, p. 25.

¹⁶ Ernst Waldschmidt, *Das Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*. Abhandlungen der Deutschen Akademie der

Chinese translations of this paragraph point to other misunderstandings.¹⁷ A perhaps slightly earlier form of this misunderstanding is preserved in a text from the *Nidānasamyukta* in the *Samyuktāgama*: *bhagavān nadikāyāṃ viharati guñjakāvasathe*.¹⁸ It is difficult to imagine what exactly the (Mūla)Sārvāstivāda redactors and others had in mind: *guñjaka* and *kuñjikā* are plant names, and they do not make much sense here. This evidence again confirms and adds to the many traces of a very old tradition preserved in Theravāda canonical literature.

Taking these considerations into account, Inscription II can be translated, as far as it is understood at present, as follows:

[Lord Buddha's] pupil Anuruddha, Anuruddha's pupil Savvananda, Sa[vvananda's pupil (two names lost)] pupil Disāgiri, Disāgiri's pupil Bharāṇa, Bha[rāṇa's pupil (two names lost)] [pupil] Nātaka-Dhammagutta, Nātaka-Dhamma[gutta's pupil (two names lost)] pupil Dhammadinna, by Dhammadinna's [pupil ... (name lost)] *ch.daka* the column was ordered to be made (together with/ set up beside) a brick ... A *torāṇa* was made (?) and a column was erected.

Even if much of what has been said above concerning the teacher-disciple lineage and chronology is hypothetical and highly conjectural, both of these brief and challenging new inscriptions certainly contribute interesting details to the knowledge of the dogmatic and linguistic history of early Buddhism, and, if the lineage of teachers is interpreted correctly, connect the monks active at Deorkothar in about 200 BCE directly to the Buddha. The number of generations that separate the donors of the columns from the Buddha rules out any date for his Nirvāṇa earlier than about 400–380 BCE.

REFLECTIONS ON THE BAHUŚRUTĪYAS

The Bahuśrutīya school has been known previously from only four, or possibly five, records: three on pillars from Nāgārjunakoṇḍa and one from Kesānapalli, both in present-day Andhra Pradesh, as well as from one extremely doubtful, and indeed probably non-existent, record from Pālāṭu Dherī near Peshawar in the north.¹⁹

Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-historische Klasse. I: Jahrgang 1949, Nr. 1. Berlin 1950; II: Jg. 1950, Nr. 2. 1951; III: Jg. 1950, Nr. 3. 1951 [Rev: F Edgerton, JAOS 77. 1957, pp. 227-232], p. 162 § 9.4 with note 3.

¹⁷ André Bareau, *Recherches sur la biographie du Buddha dans les Sūtrapīṭaka et les Vinayapīṭaka anciens: II, Les derniers mois. Le parinirvāṇa et les funérailles*. Tome 2. Publications de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient 77 (1971), Paris, pp. 86 foll.

¹⁸ Ch. Tripāthī, *Fünfundzwanzig Sūtras des Nidānasamyukta* (Sanskrittexte aus den Turfanfunden VIII), Berlin, 1962, p. 167 § 19.1; for parallels cf. Jin-il Chung: *A Survey of the Sanskrit Fragments Corresponding to the Chinese Samyuktāgama*, Tokyo, 2008, p. 111, Sūtra 301. The word occurs again in a smaller fragment recorded in SWTF s.v. Guñjakāvasatha, cf. s.v. (Kuñjikāvasatha).

¹⁹ The following abbreviations are used in this table: L: Étienne Lamotte, *Histoire du Bouddhisme Indien I*, Louvain 1958 = *History of Indian Buddhism, from the Origins to the Śāka Era*, Louvain 1988; CII:

- L 39. (1.) Jar, Pālāṭu Dherī; CII II.1, no. LVb, p. 122; Tsukamoto V PaDh 3
saṃghe cadudiṣe śamanana bah[ūṣuti]a[ka]na kaś[y]aviyana [parigrahe].
- L 40. (2.) Pillar, Nāgārjunakoṇḍa (Māṭharīputra Vīrapuruṣadatta, 3rd cent.); EI XX 1929/30, p. 24; Tsukamoto II Naga 44
... imam viharo savajātaniyuto acariyānaṃ bahusutiyānaṃ patiṭṭhapito ...
- L 41. (3.) Pillar, Nāgārjunakoṇḍa (Ehavaḷa Cāntamūla, year 2); EI XX 1929/30, p. 62; Tsukamoto II Naga 42
... vihāro acariyānaṃ bahusutiyānaṃ patiṭṭhapito ...
- L – (4.) Pillar, Nāgārjunakoṇḍa; (Ehavaḷa Cāntamūla, year 2); EI XXI 1931/32, pp. 62f., Tsukamoto II Naga 43
... ayam Devīviharo savajātaniyuto ajariyānaṃ bahusutiyānaṃ patiṭṭhapito ...
- L – (5.) Kesānapalli (Vāsethīputa Siri-Cāntamūla, year 13), EI XXXVIII 1964/65, p. 313–318; Tsukamoto II Kesa 16
... nigājasa bahusutiyānaṃ ...

The Deorkothar inscription fills a lacuna, by showing that the Bahuśrutīya school spread over a larger area than has been assumed, and adding to the map of schools a Vindhyan foothold for the Bahuśrutīyas in Central India (that is, in modern Madhya Pradesh).²⁰ Our inscription is not engraved on a portable object like a seal, which an itinerant monk might have carried with him and left behind anywhere: it is engraved on a massive stone column. That the column was erected on the initiative of a member of the Bahuśrutīyas points to an influential presence of the school at Deorkothar for some time.

The Deorkothar complex commands a strategic position at the entry to the Vindhya from the plains below. On one of the many feeders of the Dakṣiṇāpatha, it can be approached from Bodh Gaya, Pataliputra, Varanasi/Sarnath, Prayag, or Kausambi, and it links up with routes across the plateau to Vidisha and Ujjain, connecting it to the ‘Buddhist networks’ of the Betwa valley and leading on to the Narmada River and beyond.²¹ In the vicinity is the large ruined stūpa at Dundhi Gadhi (Dist. Rewa, MP: fig.

Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum: Vol. II,1: *Kharoṣṭhī Inscriptions with the exception of those of Aśoka* by Sten Konow, Calcutta 1929; EI: *Epigraphia Indica*; Tsukamoto, see note 4 above.

²⁰ The origins and history of the Bahuśrutīya school are obscure. According to ‘the traditions of the Northwest’, the Bahuśrutīyas arose in the second century post-Nirvāṇa, directly from the Mahāsāṃghikas, or, according to the Theravādins and Sāṃmitīyas, from the Gokulikas. According to Paramārtha (499–569 CE) and Kuji (窺基: K’oueī-Ki, 632–682 CE), an *arhat* or *asaikṣa* named Yājñavalkya, a contemporary of the Buddha, formed the Bahuśrutīya school after he had spent two centuries in meditation in the Himālayas. See André Bareau, *Les sectes bouddhiques du petit véhicule* (Publications de l’École française d’Extrême-Orient, Volume XXXVIII), Paris 1955, pp. 81–83. If Paramārtha’s origin myth is taken at face value, then Dhammadeva would be quite an early member of this school, almost of the first generation. Bhāviveka cites a *Mahāprātihārya-sūtra* ‘of the Prajñāptivādin-Bahuśrutīyas’, implying a direct affiliation with the Prajñāptivādins, one of the earliest Mahāsāṃghika schools: see P. Skilling, ‘Citations from the Scriptures of the “Eighteen Schools” in the *Tarkajvālā*’, in Petra Kieffer-Pülz and Jens-Uwe Hartmann (eds.), *Bauddhavidyāsudhākaraḥ: Studies in Honour of Heinz Bechert on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday*, Swisttal-Odendorf: Indica et Tibetica 30, 1997, p. 608 (full article, pp. 605–614).

²¹ For these routes, see especially Dilip K. Chakrabarti, *The Archaeology of the Deccan Routes: The*

14), about 20 km away, set like a landmark on the towering cliffs,²² as well as other sites which await further study. About 100 km to the south along the Tons or Tamas River valley lies the famous Bharhut stūpa (Dist. Satna, MP: fig. 15),²³ and still further is the Aśokan edict at Rupnath (Dist. Katni, MP). Although the area surrounding Bharhut remains to be properly excavated, it would seem that Deorkothar is a bigger complex than that at Bharhut. This suggests that the monastic lineages who participated in the construction activity and the erection of the pillar at Deorkothar, including the Bahuśrutīya lineage, established a significant centre here at the edge of the Vindhya. From here, their ideas and practices could have been carried southward to the Andhra country, including, perhaps, to Nagarjunakonda and Kesanapalli, where, as we have seen, among others the Bahuśrutīya school was also active.

At the same time, this amply demonstrates how our picture of the distribution of Buddhist schools in ancient India is fragmentary and fragile – a picture which can change dramatically with the discovery of a single new inscription, like this one from Deorkothar. Moreover, the date of the Deorkothar inscriptions – perhaps about 200 BCE – is at least two centuries earlier than that of almost all other inscriptions that mention Buddhist schools. Consequently, it provides one of the oldest epigraphical references to a Buddhist school. If this Deorkothar inscription is more or less contemporaneous to the three inscriptions mentioning the Hemavatas,²⁴ the evidence from Sanchi and the adjacent Sonari now no longer stands as an isolated early, and sometimes even disputed, reference to a Buddhist school.

The Deorkothar and Sanchi inscriptions expose the gap between the early epigraphic records and the later literary records. In the region of Vidisha, inscribed reliquaries record a lineage of Hemavata teachers, whose memory is preserved in the verses of *Dīpavaṃsa*. We have geographical traces of a Hemavata lineage in India – but we know almost nothing about the school, of which only a single text, a **Vinayamāṭṛkā*, survives.²⁵ From the eastern Vindhya we now have two teacher–disciple lineages, one certainly of the Bahuśrutīya school, the other by association presumably the same. But here too we know little about the school, unless the **Satya-*° or **Tatva-siddhiśāstra* indeed belongs to it.²⁶ In a broader perspective, these instances show how the memory

ancient routes from the Ganga plain to the Deccan, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 2005 (Rez. SAS 22 (2006)). See also Himanshu Prabha Ray, 'Bharhut and Sanchi – Nodal Points in a Commercial Interchange,' in B. M. Pande and B. D. Chattopadhyaya (eds.), *Archaeology and History: Essays in Memory of Sh. A. Ghosh*, Delhi: Agam Kala Prakashan 1987, pp. 621–629.

²² Cf. A. K. Singh, 'Buddhist Stupa Complex at Deour Kothara and Dundhi Gadhi and the Monuments in its Neighbourhood', *Purātattva* No. 38 (2008), pp. 202–204 and Pls. 1–11, pp. 31–32 at end of volume (especially Pls. 7–11).

²³ See now Jason Hawkes, 'The Wider Archaeological Contexts of the Buddhist Stupa Site of Bharhut', Chap. 9 in Jason Hawkes and Akira Shimada (eds.), *Buddhist Stupas in South Asia: Recent Archaeological, Art-Historical, and Historical Perspectives*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press (SOAS Studies on South Asia) 2009.

²⁴ Tsukamoto, as note 4, IV Sanc 679, IV Sona 3 and 5; Willis, *op. cit.*

²⁵ Bareau, *Sectes*, as note 20, pp. 111–113, devotes three pages to the school.

²⁶ Bareau, *Sectes*, as note 20, pp. 81–83, devotes three pages to the school, but one page is based entirely

and construction of spiritual descent was important to the monastics, and how the spread of Buddhism involved individuals, human beings, who, through relics and claimed lineages, established a presence in relation to the Buddha. The principles embedded in these epigraphic lineages may be fruitfully compared with teachers' lineages recorded in Vinaya and Vāṃsa literatures.